



Town of Montague
Department, Board, Committee, Commission
BUDGET NARRATIVE

FY 24

Complete this form electronically! Be clear and concise!

Department: Cemetery Commission Submitted by: Judith Lorei

1. Please describe and provide the rationale for any notable changes in your FY24 budget request.

The Cemetery Commission is requesting a substantial increase in the FY24 budget. Mike Fleming is retiring at the end of FY'23. He has been mowing the Town cemeteries for 20 years at a discounted rate. To date, our \$12,000 annual budget has covered costs. Two other contractors provided quotes for mowing and fall/spring clean-up of 7 town cemeteries (does not include Dry Hill which is mowed annually by a volunteer). Based on their preliminary quotes, we anticipate the need to increase this annual budget line to \$30,000.

In addition, we are requesting a capital outlay that support establishment of the green burial section of the Highland Cemetery, which will allow burials to commence in 2023. Note that this outlay will be requested at the winter Special Town Meeting and will be removed from our budget request if it passes at that time.

2. To this point in FY23, have you enhanced or expanded the programs and services you provide, or implemented new tools or technology that you'd like the Finance Committee and Selectboard to know about? Please describe.

In addition to its historical responsibility for maintenance and management of the Town's existing cemeteries, the Montague Cemetery Commission commenced management of Highland Cemetery, an active cemetery, in FY23. We managed 14 burials in 2022.

Other work includes preparation for opening the green burial section in April 2022:

- professional phased development plan conducted including:
 - Marked boundaries, base map, flagged trees to be removed (dead) and flagged walking trails;
- marked 14 (of 20) gravesites;

In addition, the Commission:

- removed an old cargo container that was an eyesore for the cemetery;
- planted a new wildflower garden;
- contracted with the Franklin County Vocational Technical School to have the damage archway replaced

And we continue to:

- create an inventory of headstone condition for all cemeteries and create accurate maps.

3. Are there presently challenges to your department's ability to meet its goals and requirements due to its FY23 operating budget? If so, offer any your recommendations you may have for improving the situation in FY24.

As stated above, we are dealing with sticker shock of hiring a new contractor just to maintain the cemeteries. Ideally, a larger budget would cover the costs of other cemetery maintenance (stone walls, tree removal, etc.) which we have not been able to do. The Commission is considering the sustainability of maintaining an active cemetery

through an exclusively volunteer structure, particularly as other private cemeteries have contacted the Commission with concerns regarding their own sustainability.

4. Did you receive funding for any special articles in FY22 or FY23? Please list them and share the current status of those expenditures/projects.

We received \$1,440 to begin phase one work to clean up the green burial section of Highland. Those funds are spent. Based on this initial work, we have a better idea of the funds we will need to finish this project to open the green section for grave purchases in April 2023. The cost is approximately \$8,000 including phased development, a sign and a bench.